

we here see that the Egyptians, in thus conventionally rendering the lotus and papyrus, instinctively obeyed the law which we find everywhere in the leaves of plants, viz. the radiation of the leaves, and all veins on the leaves, in graceful curves from the parent stem; and not only do they follow this law in the drawing of the individual flower, but also in the grouping of several flowers together, as may be seen, not only in No. 4, but also in their representation of plants growing in the desert, Nos. 16 and 18 of the same plate, and in No. 13. In Nos. 9 and 10 of Plate V. they learned the same lesson from the feather, another type of ornament (11 and 12, Plate V.); the same instinct is again at work at Nos. 4 and 5, where the type is one of the many forms of palm-trees so common in the country.

The third kind of Egyptian ornament, viz. that which is simply decorative, or which appears so to our eyes, but which had doubtless its own laws and reasons for its application, although they are not so apparent to us. Plates VIII., IX., X., XI., are devoted to this class of ornament, and are from paintings on tombs, dresses, utensils, and sarcophagi. They are all distinguished by graceful symmetry and perfect distribution. The variety that can be produced by the few simple types we have referred to is very remarkable.

On Plate IX. are patterns of ceilings, and appear to be reproductions of woven patterns. Side by side with the conventional rendering of actual things, the first attempts of every people to produce works of ornament take this direction. The early necessity of plaiting together straw or bark of trees, for the formation of articles of clothing, the covering of their rude dwelling, or the ground on which they reposed, induced the employment at first of straws and bark of different natural colours, to be afterwards replaced by artificial dyes, which gave the first idea, not only of ornament, but of geometrical arrangement. Nos. 1-4, Plate IX., are from Egyptian paintings, representing mats whereon the king stands; whilst Nos. 6 and 7 are from the ceilings of tombs, which evidently represent tents covered by mats. Nos. 9, 10, 12, show how readily the meander or Greek fret was produced by the same means. The universality of this ornament in every style of architecture, and to be found in some shape or other amongst the first attempts of ornament of every savage tribe, is an additional proof of their having had a similar origin.

The formation of patterns by the equal division of similar lines, as by weaving, would give to a rising people the first notions of symmetry, arrangement, disposition, and the distribution of masses. The Egyptians, in their decoration of large surfaces, never appear to have gone beyond a geometrical arrangement. Flowing lines are very rare, comparatively, and never the motive of the composition, though the germ of even this mode of decoration, the volute form, exists in their rope ornament. (Nos. 10, 13-16, 18-24, on Plate X., and 1, 2, 4, 7, Plate XI.) Here the several coils of rope are subjected to a geometrical arrangement; but the unrolling of this cord gives the very form which is the source of so much beauty in many subsequent styles. We venture, therefore, to claim for the Egyptian style, that though the oldest, it is, in all that is requisite to constitute a true style of art, the most perfect. The language in which it reveals itself to us may seem foreign, peculiar, formal, and rigid; but the ideas and the teachings it conveys to us are of the soundest. As we proceed with other styles, we shall see that they approach perfection only so far as they followed, in common with the Egyptians, the true principles to be observed in every flower that grows. Like these favourites of Nature, every ornament should have its perfume; *i.e.* the reason of its application. It should endeavour to rival the grace of construction, the harmony of its varied forms, and due proportion and subordination of one part to the other found in the model. When we find any of these characteristics wanting in a work of ornament, we may be sure that it belongs to a borrowed style, where the spirit which animated the original work has been lost in the copy.

The architecture of the Egyptians is thoroughly polychromatic,—they painted everything; therefore we have much to learn from them on this head. They dealt in flat tints, and used neither shade nor

shadow, yet found no difficulty in poetically conveying to the mind the identity of the object they desired to represent. They used colour as they did form, conventionally. Compare the representation of the lotus (No. 3, Plate IV.) with the natural flower (No. 1); how charmingly are the characteristics of the natural flower reproduced in the representations! See how the outer leaves are distinguished by a darker green, and the inner protected leaves by a lighter green; whilst the purple and yellow tones of the inner flower are represented by red leaves floating in a field of yellow, which most completely recalls the yellow glow of the original. We have here Art added to Nature, and derive an additional pleasure in the perception of the mental effort which has produced it.

The colours used by the Egyptians were principally red, blue, and yellow, with black and white to define and give distinctiveness to the various colours; with green used generally, though not universally, as a local colour, such as the green leaves of the lotus. These were, however, indifferently coloured green or blue; blue in the more ancient times, and green during the Ptolemaic period; at which time, also, were added both purple and brown, but with diminished effect. The red also, which is found on the tombs or mummy-cases of the Greek or Roman period, is lower in tone than that of the ancient times; and it appears to be a universal rule that, in all archaic periods of art, the primary colours, blue, red, and yellow, are the prevailing colours, and these used most harmoniously and successfully. Whilst in periods when art is practised traditionally, and not instinctively, there is a tendency to employ the secondary colours and hues, and shades of every variety, though rarely with equal success. We shall have many opportunities of pointing this out in subsequent chapters.